

VZCZCXRO4175
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHKU #1063/01 3140933
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 100933Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4164
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001063

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2019
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: REACHING OUT TO THE JAHRA "FRONTIER": BRIDGING
THE TRIBAL/URBAN DIVIDE

REF: A. KUWAIT 244
[B](#). KUWAIT 558
[C](#). KUWAIT 812

Classified By: Economic Counselor Oliver John for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On October 22, as part of post's initiative to expand Embassy outreach beyond the traditional "walls" of Kuwait (ref a), Ambassador Jones visited Jahra, Kuwait's second largest city (after Kuwait City) and met with its Governor Shaykh Mubarak Al-Humoud Al Sabah. Jahra, around 50 km from Kuwait and home to major Kuwaiti Bedouin tribes such as the Ajman, Ayyar, and Al Anezi, is the site of the symbolic "Red Fort," from whence Kuwaiti nationalists in 1922 fended off attacks from the "Ikhwan" - Wahhabi-linked invaders from Saudi Arabia. The Governor acknowledged the major social differences between Kuwaiti urban elite merchants and the -- now settled -- Bedouin tribes in Jahra. Historically, despite the Amir's familial ties to Jahra, it has been an "economically underserved" part of Kuwait. Underscoring the urban rural divide, an editorial subsequently appeared in the local press in which the writer sarcastically asked "what possible matters of mutual interest" the Ambassador might have had to discuss with the governor of Jahra. Post will be looking at ways to follow-up with residents of this underserved community. End Summary.

Outreach to the Overlooked

[1](#)2. (C) Noting her earlier visit to Jahra's historic Red Fort (scene of the 1922 battle against Wahhabi linked "Ikhwan" from Saudi Arabia) Ambassador conveyed to Shaykh Mubarak her appreciation for Jahra's unique place in Kuwaiti history. The Governor responded warmly to the Ambassador's visit and noted his reciprocal interest in bolstering regular contact, commenting that the improved security situation in Jahra -- once viewed as a hotbed of extremist sentiment -- should facilitate such exchanges. The kind of exchanges the Ambassador proposed, he said, would help promote "positive thinking" on both sides. The Governor observed that Jahra remains an important passageway for U.S. military and business travelers transiting to and from Iraq and noted that there have been no recent security issues affecting such travel; Jahra is a "stable" community, he suggested. (Note: Predominantly tribal, the Jahra governorate covers two-thirds of Kuwait and contains the country's second largest city and significant oil and gas resources. End note).

[1](#)3. (C) Reflecting the general view that Kuwait's nearly 100,000 stateless 'bidoon' (ref b) present both economic challenges and potential security risks, the Governor acknowledged that dealing with Jahra's nearly 60,000 such residents presents unique challenges, noting that "we keep a close eye on them." At the same time he supported their greater integration into Kuwait's society and labor force. "We are a state of immigrants as well" he noted, pointing to

his own Turkish origins on his mother's side. He assessed that the majority of Kuwait's 'bidoon' originated in Iraq.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador re-conveyed Embassy condolences regarding an August wedding tent fire (ref c) that resulted in fifty-five deaths and represented the worst tragedy to affect Kuwait since the 1990 Iraqi invasion. (Note: The Governor, who was out of Kuwait at the time of the fire, was broadly criticized for not responding adequately to the tragedy. End note).

¶5. (C) Comment: Though the Governor claimed that his Jahra constituents were well-served in terms of public services, by comparison with the downtown merchants and other elite, and even some of the more tribal areas closer to the city, the governorate has not received the same level of infrastructure attention. Posting governors to Jahra -- a mere 25 miles from Kuwait City -- is tantamount to frontier assignments in the minds of some of the Al Sabah.

¶6. (C) Comment Continued: Indeed this well educated but somewhat insouciant Al Sabah (brother of former education U/S Rasha Al Sabah, who is well known to the USG) appeared far more interested in discussing the global impact of the US financial sub-prime mortgage crisis and China's growing economic might than developments in his own governorate. Jahra typifies in many Kuwaiti minds the threatening rise of a more assertive tribal population to challenge the prerequisites of the traditional urban elites (merchants and Al Sabah). During Ramadan, after most senior GoK officials, including the Amir, cancelled their Ghabqas (late night Ramadan dinner get-togethers) out of respect for the fire

KUWAIT 00001063 002 OF 002

victims, several Kuwaiti's questioned the necessity of this, telling Ambassador Jones, and the Jahrawi were "not real Kuwaitis." A member of a prominent Jahra family recently shared with Econcouns his surprise that the GOK was not putting more money into the directorate, given that the Amir grew up in Jahra and his Bedouin mother hails from a Jahra family. Despite past neglect, the GOK is now investing more in Jahra, including in the Bubiyan port mega-project and in a recently-tendered \$2.6 billion Subiya power station. How much of that development will trickle into the dishdasha pockets of Jahra's residents - as opposed to their better-heeled and better-connected compatriots in Kuwait city -- remains very much to be seen.

¶7. (C) Comment Continued: Post intends to follow-up with this underserved community and continue outreach efforts. Post will explore the idea of opening an American Corner in Jahra as well as supporting youth mentoring efforts as part of a broader outreach to youth. Youth outreach includes hosting a day trip to the '99' theme park with high school students. (Note: The '99' theme park is based on a popular super hero comic series, created by a Kuwaiti, intended to inspire youth and encourage tolerance and respect. End Note.) In addition, post will continue to support the 'Injaz' high school business education program that reaches out to students throughout Kuwait, including Jahra. Ambassador also strongly encouraged GE, the successful bidder on the Al Subiya power tender, to sponsor a youth team from Jahra for Kuwaiti's annual 'Injaz' competition. (Note: Injaz Kuwait is a member of Junior Achievement Worldwide. End Note.) End Comment.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
visit Kuwait's Classified Website at:

[http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa it](http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa%20it)

JONES